

BILLINGS AND POMPEYS PILLAR NATIONAL MONUMENT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Billings Field Office is preparing two resource management plans (RMPs). One will address public lands managed by the Billings Field Office and the other will be specific to Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM) and adjacent public land (approximately 470 acres). One environmental impact statement (EIS) will be associated with both plans, but there will be separate records of decision (ROD). Currently, lands within the Billings Field Office, including PPNM, are managed according to the 1984 Billings Resource Area RMP, as amended.

ISSUES:

Preparation of an RMP affords many opportunities for collaboration with local, state, federal and tribal governments and land management agencies, public interest groups, and public land users.

Preliminary planning issues and management concerns are based on some of the foremost issues currently facing the Billings Field Office and Pompeys Pillar, and comments submitted during the scoping period for the RMPs. The planning issues for the Billings RMP include: vegetation; wildlife and fisheries; special status species; commercial uses including energy development, livestock grazing, forest products and areas within community wildlife protection plans; rights-of-way and land use authorizations; locatable and saleable minerals; commercial special recreation permits; recreation management, travel management and access; and special management area designations (including areas of critical environmental concern, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness study areas). Planning issues for Pompeys Pillar include: cultural and heritage resources; wildlife and fisheries; vegetation and recreation and visitor services.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The Billings RMP will guide management for the approximately 427,000 acres of federally managed surface and about 906,000 subsurface (mineral estate) acres administered by the Billings Field Office in Big Horn, Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland and Yellowstone counties. The planning area also includes administration of 6,340 acres of public land inside the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in Big Horn County, Wyo. The Pompeys Pillar RMP will include the 51 acres of public land designated as a national monument on January 17, 2001, and the adjacent BLM public land (about 422 acres). Located about 30 miles east of Billings, PPNM was designated a national monument for the purpose of protecting the ethnographic, historic and archaeological values associated with the sandstone outcrop known as Pompeys Pillar.

In October 2007, the Montana State Office approved a preparation plan for the Billings and PPNM RMPs. Public scoping was initiated May 15, 2008, with the publication of the notice of intent in the *Federal Register*. Formal scoping ended August 22, 2008; however, public comments can be submitted any time during the planning process. Seven public open houses were held across the planning area and about 600 specific comments were provided by agencies and interested parties.

The BLM is working with 15 cooperating agencies on the two RMPs, including: Carbon, Golden Valley, Wheatland, Musselshell, and Yellowstone counties; Big Horn County, Wyo.; Musselshell Planning Project; Northern Cheyenne Tribe; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Montana State Historic Preservation Office; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation - Northeastern Land Office and Southern Land Office; Montana Association of Conservation Districts; Bureau of Indian Affairs; and the Bureau of Reclamation. In addition, the Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) has designated two committee members to participate in the planning process.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest is moderate to high because the RMPs will establish management direction for the field office and PPNM for the next 10-15 years. There is increased interest in energy development, travel management, and special area designations.

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